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THE AUTHORSHIP

OF THE

FOURTH GOSPEL.

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TESTAMENT"; "COMMENTARIES ON THE GOSPELS ACCORDING TO
ST. LUKE AND ST. JOHN, AND THE EPISTLE TO
THE ROMANS," ETC.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

Argument of the Tract.

THE concurrent testimony of Christian antiquity, of the sects, the Church and early Fathers, and of the Gospel itself, points to the Johannine authorship. The contents and characteristics of the Book are examined, a comparison between the Gospel and the First Epistle of St. John is instituted, and the conclusion is arrived at that the author of the Gospel must have been a Jew, a Palestinian Christian, a contemporary of Jesus, a member of the intimate circle of His friends, one of His Apostles, the disciple whom Jesus loved, even John, the son of Zebedee.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL.¹



I.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.



HERE is a small memoir composed eighteen centuries ago, which, if published separately, would scarcely form a brochure of forty or fifty pages. This

The memoir.

little work has been, especially in the last century, the subject of critical study and exegetical commentaries so numerous that they would fill a library.²

Nevertheless, it does not present any particular obscurities. It is a simple recital, written in a clear flowing style, its simplicity sometimes borders on *naïveté*, and if its contents are deep, they resemble the ocean in this respect, which is transparent even to the bottom in fine weather. This book has been rightly compared to the light of the moon, whose brilliant splendour meets our gaze through the mysterious calm of the night

Its style.

¹ Written for the Series in French. Translated by Mrs. Kelly.

² See the rough list prepared by M. René Gregory. Clark, Edinburgh, 1875.

The story.

What is it, then—if there be no difficulty of style, nor anything abstract in the character of the subject—which can stimulate, even to this day, the ardour of the critic and the sagacity of interpreters? It is that the story contained in this book is that of a fact which dominates over the whole history; and on the conception we form of the book depends largely our estimate of the fact itself.

What is Christianity?

Is Christianity simply, as has been said, “one of the days of humanity,” which has succeeded so many others, and which will in its turn be replaced by others, a halting-place in the indefinite progress of our race? Or is it rather, the last word of the revelations of the eternal God to mankind, the sheet-anchor offered to fallen man by Infinite Love?

The question one of life or death.

That is the question that arises in connexion with this little book, and is the real subject of discussion. We have not here a literary problem that we require to solve, an interesting scientific subject to explain; but a question of life or death which is presented to the world and to every individual in it. If the contents of this book are historically true, we can only bow the knee before Him whose history it contains, and say to Him as Thomas is recorded to have done at the close of it, “My Lord and my God.” If it is only a religious romance, although the most sublime that has ever

been penned, it is not necessary to occupy ourselves with it at this time of day, and the men of the nineteenth century have only to say: We shall look for another. (Matt. xi. 3.)

II.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY TO THE JOHANNINE AUTHORSHIP.

CHRISTIAN antiquity has been unanimous in transmitting this book to the Church as the work of a man who was the disciple—nay, more than the disciple—the personal friend of Jesus, John the son of Zebedee, a fisherman on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret. The Church, as well as the sects most opposed to it, are agreed upon this point.

The testimony of antiquity.

In the second century the Judeo-Christian party, the most hostile to the apostolic spirit, used this narrative as taken from a book whose statements could not be called in question.¹ At the opposite extreme, Marcion, who made special claims to spiritual enlightenment, acknowledges in a letter that he, in common with all the Church, had made use of it up till the moment when he had found in the Epistle to the Galatians a passage which had

The Sects.

¹ The Clementine Homilies. These writings contain four quotations from John perfectly distinct. See Charteris, *Canonicity*, pp. 184, 185.

made him reject the authority (not the authenticity) of this Gospel.¹ We observe the same common acknowledgment in the case of two other parties, equally opposed to each other. The Montanists, a sect of enthusiasts, professing to derive everything in the life of the Church from the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit, made the promise of the Paraclete in St. John xiv.-xvi. the basis of all their work; and the philosophers, called Gnostics, constructed likewise their theory of the history of the universe from materials borrowed from this Gospel, especially from its prologue.

The Church.

Whilst these parties, who separated from the main body of the Church presided over by bishops, all made use of this book as their fulcrum, in spite of their mutual opposition, the Church, which contended with them to the bitter end, and defended itself against their multiplied attacks, never doubted the apostolic origin of this Gospel, which they used against her in quite an opposite sense.

Justin
Martyr.

Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, quotes it frequently, as without doubt forming part of the collection of "Apostolic Memoirs," which are read, said he, every Lord's day in all the churches of Christendom, and which he made the basis of his teaching in Rome.²

¹ Tertullian *contra* Marcion.

² See *Charteris*, pp. 176-178.

A little later, an African writer, giving an account of the writings which the churches in his country publicly read as apostolic, designates the Gospel of John as the fourth, and added himself in the words:

The
Muratorian
fragment.

“that which we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, declare we unto you;”—

John declares himself to be not only an eye-witness, but a hearer, and still more a narrator of all the wonderful things concerning the Lord.¹

Irenæus, about the year 180, after having related the origin of the three first Gospels, adds,

Irenæus.

“Then John, the disciple, who rested on the Lord’s bosom, also published his Gospel whilst he remained at Ephesus in Asia.”²

It is remarkable that Irenæus, who wrote at Lyons, in Gaul, came from Asia Minor, where he had spent his young days at Smyrna, under the teaching of Polycarp, who had lived with John himself, and who ought to have thoroughly known all that concerned the book attributed to this apostle.³ What authority and value does such a witness possess !

¹ A fragment, called after Muratori.

² See for numerous other testimonies of this father, *Charteris*, pp. 66–72.

³ See the letter to his friend Florinus, in which he reminds him in such a striking manner of the hours they had passed together at the feet of the venerable bishop, installed by John himself.—Eusebius, *Church History*. v. 20.

New
Testament
writers first
designated
by name in
the end of
the second
century.

The writers of the first half of the second century quote the sacred writings without naming the authors. It was not till later, at the end of the century, when Christian learning began, that they designated the writers of the New Testament by their names. Thus Irenæus is the first who quotes the Epistle to the Romans, naming the author, saying, "Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote to the Romans." The same fact occurs again with respect to the fourth Gospel. Although this Gospel is quoted throughout the whole century as of apostolic authority, it is Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, about the year 180, who was the first (after the African author quoted above) to speak of the fourth Gospel as the work of John :—

"It is what the Holy Scriptures, and all inspired men teach us, among whom John says, 'In the beginning was the Word.'"

The apostolic origin of this Gospel was a fact of public notoriety, to which it was not generally necessary to bear especial testimony.

Relation
between the
testimony of
the Church
and that of
the sects.

When we reflect on the relation of the Church to the sects, we ask how, if the fourth Gospel was the product of one of these sects, it could have been universally received by the Church, or how, if it had been composed at a later period in the history of the Church, it could have been so generally received by the sects? There is but one reply to this question, and it is instructive.

This double fact can only be explained on the supposition of the Gospel having been composed and used in the Church before these divers heretical sects sprang up; so that they, while going their separate ways, all carried away the book with them as the patrimony of the family, which they were not willing to give up. This action on their part pre-supposes, not only the high antiquity of this Gospel,—since the separation of these sects took place towards the end of the first century (compare 1 John ii. 19),—but that its existence and authority were recognised before this separation. Now this authority, which the evil use that these sects made of this writing did not shake, could only rest on the conviction of its apostolic origin.

Explanation
of the fact.

This conviction of the Church is declared in a document almost as old as the Gospel itself, the supplementary statement in the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel of John. The Gospel, properly so called, ends with the twentieth chapter, for the verses thirty and thirty-one of that chapter plainly indicate the close of the book. The twenty-first chapter has then been added subsequently, evidently from the oral narrative of the author of the whole book, for in that chapter the method of narration and style are the same as in the rest of the book. The aim of this appendix has been to preserve the three prophecies of the risen Jesus as to the future of His disciples.

The twenty-
first chapter.

The aim of
it.

The pre-
dictions of
the twenty-
first chapter.

The first, about his disciples in general, to whom Jesus predicted, through the miraculous draught of fishes, the most magnificent missionary success; the second, with respect to Peter, to whom He entrusted the direction of the Church, and promised him martyrdom as a compensation for his denial; the third, with regard to John, about whom Jesus said to Peter, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" These last words, which promised at any rate to John a longer life than that of the other apostles, and extending beyond the destruction of Jerusalem, got spread abroad in the Church in an altered form. It was pretended that the Lord had promised John that he should not die till His final return, or in other words, that he should not die at all. In order to rectify this error, the author took care to state clearly the exact meaning of the words of Jesus. When was this appendix drawn up? It must have been at the time when the death of John and the apparent contradiction of this fact with the promise of Jesus occupied the mind of the Church, consequently, immediately after his death, or more probably still, at the time when it was seen approaching. The friends of John wished, by preserving the very words of Jesus, to prevent the contradiction which this event would give to His words, under the form in which they were usually quoted. They drew up, with this idea,

The date of
the chapter.

this appendix, and ended it with this remarkable declaration,—

“This is the disciple (the disciple whom Jesus loved, v. 20, 23) which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.”

These men who knew the author personally, who knew from the relations that they had long had with him, that he was incapable of bearing false witness, declare in the face of the world by publishing this chapter, that its author is none other than the disciple whom Jesus loved, and they know him to be incapable of lying; and they act in this manner while that author is still alive, for that comes out in the different tenses of the two verbs used, “He who *bears* witness of these things,” and “He who *has written* them.” His book is composed, finished, but his oral testimony still lasts. We may add that this twenty-first chapter is not lacking in any document, nor manuscript, nor ancient version of the Gospel. The Gospel has never existed without it, this appendix has always been published with it. It is difficult to imagine a more ancient testimony, nor one more worthy of respect.

The
testimony of
the
publishers.

There is one, however, that outdoes it in antiquity and dignity. In many passages in this book the author designates and points to himself. In chap. i. 14 he speaks of himself as an ocular witness of what he is about to say :—

Testimony
of the
author
himself.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory . . . full of grace and truth.”

The moral
sense
impossible
here.

It has been maintained that every Christian can, in a certain sense,¹ affirm the same thing. Yes, in a certain sense; but this purely moral sense is impossible here, for the Evangelist speaks evidently of the Incarnation, and the earthly life of Jesus, whose history he is about to relate. In such a context it is impossible to use the term *beheld* in a purely spiritual sense. In chapter xix. 35, when the side of Jesus was pierced by the spear, and blood and water flowed from the wound, the Evangelist says:—

“And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

Writers have used and abused the term “*he that*” to maintain that the author was here distinguishing himself from the witness who had seen the fact, and had told him of it. But how could he say of any other man than himself, “He knows that he *saith* true”? One man does not answer for another’s conscience; in the nature of things a man can only answer for himself. The Greek pronoun translated “*he that*” proves nothing to the contrary, but is frequently employed in this Gospel in an exclusive sense, “He, and he alone” (comp. i. 18; v. 39; ix. 37); and in no case to point out a different person. It is the witness of the fact

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18; 1 John iii. 16.

who is narrating it, it is *he alone* who has seen it, and all others who know the fact only know it by *faith* in his testimony.

“He who hath seen, has borne witness of it, that ye may believe.”

The testimony of the author himself in the capacity of eye-witness is unanswerably confirmed by the passage in his first Epistle (1 John i. 1-4), which so much struck the author of the Muratorian fragment quoted above:—

Confirmation of the testimony in the first Epistle.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life . . . declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

It is not possible to express in more forcible terms the fact of personal perception than by means of the different bodily senses,—sight, hearing, touch. Some have supposed that the author wished simply to controvert the heretics who pretended that the body of Jesus was only an appearance; but the affirmation of John would have been of no value to such persons, for these people acknowledged that there had been sensible appearances in the life of Jesus, only they maintain that they were without material reality; and any affirmation of witnesses would not demonstrate to them the contrary. Besides, the first words, “He that was from the beginning,” would have been worse than

The affirm-
ation of the
fact of the
Incarnation.

useless in this sense. That which John affirmed in this introduction of his Epistle was not the reality of the body of Jesus, it was the solemn and fundamental fact of the Incarnation, the dwelling of the Eternal Word in the humanity of Jesus. Life has been manifested, and we have seen it. And again, he who has seen, heard, touched, bears witness, in order that those who have not seen, heard, touched, may believe, and thus possess and rejoice with Him (vers. 3, 4). There is too much holy majesty and tender love in these words to suppose that they were those of an impostor; and if he who wrote them was what he pretended to be, the witness of the life and death of Jesus, it must be admitted that this witness was an Apostle, and that this Apostle was the disciple whom Jesus loved, as has been attested in the twenty-first chapter. For he alone was at the foot of the cross (John xix. 26), and was able to see with his eyes the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus.

The extent
of their
testimony to
the
authorship
of the fourth
Gospel.

Such are the witnesses who attest the Johannine origin of the fourth Gospel. We do not think that any other ancient book has similar witnesses. They go back to Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, the friend of John, through the whole of the second century, to the editors of the writing of which they were the depositories, even to John himself.

The only religious party in the second century,

who appear to have rejected this Gospel, as well as the other writings of John, was a little sect in Asia Minor, of whom Irenæus and Epiphanius speak, and whom the latter called *Aloges*, a name which probably contains a play upon words, this term signifying at the same time, "who denies the Word," and "destitute of reason." These sectaries were compelled to reject the writings of John through their antipathy to the Montanists, who found in these writings a support for their exaltation. But they became, without intending it, witnesses to the general tradition of the Church, by attributing them to the heretic Cerinthus, who had been the adversary of the Apostle John at Ephesus. To make this man the author of these writings was in effect admitting that they had been published in the place, and at the same time as the tradition of the Church placed the composition of this Gospel.

The only
opponents.

III.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.

WE will now turn to the book itself as if we had hitherto been strangers to the Christian Church, and as if this book had fallen for the first time into our hands.

In the preâmbles (vers. 1-18) the author, with great solemnity, impresses on us the gravity and decisive value of the history he is going to narrate

The
prologue
(i. 1-18).

The
substance
of the
prologue.

to us. There is in God an eternal Being like Him, who lives with Him in the most intimate communion, who even shares His divinity, and is the expression of His Essence, as the word is the expression of the thought—different from it, and yet one with it. This Being has been the agent of the creation, He is the principle of Life, and of all that lives, the Light of all who see clearly, and He has Himself appeared in the world to enlighten it. But although every precaution was taken that He might be known at His coming, although He was preceded by a messenger appointed to prepare His way, and although a dwelling was beforehand prepared in the world for Him, this was closed against Him, and “His own received Him not.” Nevertheless the blessing of His coming has not been lost. A band of men were found who recognized in this Being the characteristic signs of the glory of the Most High, of His grace and truth, and who understood that this was none other than “the Word made flesh.” They received Him, and found in Him the plenitude of grace and truth, and the true knowledge of God. By the new birth received in His name, they became the children of God.

This is the substance of this incomparable preamble, which, like the overture in an oratorio, presents all the essential features of the work that is to follow. The three aspects of the history of

Christ, as it is presented to us in this Gospel, answer in fact to the three great thoughts of the prologue: 1st, Jesus manifesting Himself to the world as the Eternal Word; 2nd, a part of mankind shutting their eyes to the light and rejecting it; 3rd, a church of believers, rallying to His call and endued with grace by Him; in three words: Jesus—unbelief—faith. Upon these three thoughts rests, as we shall see, the plan of the whole narrative.

Its correspondence with the aspects of the history.

In the first part (ch. i.-iv.) the first of these three thoughts prevails: Jesus and His revelation as the Son of God. This revelation is made through the testimony of John the Baptist, and by the manifestations of Jesus Himself, in word and deed. We leave to the reader the task of studying the narrative, and applying to it this general idea. We will only add that the fact of this revelation of Jesus does not exclusively occupy this first part; but the two others, faith and unbelief, have also a place in it, although a subsidiary one: the first, in the person of the five disciples whose calling is mentioned in chap. i.; then in that of Nicodemus (chap. iii.), and of the Samaritans (iv.), and even in the narrative of the nobleman's son (chap. iv.), although his faith, as well as that of Nicodemus, was tarnished by religious materialism, by the dependence it placed on miracles; and on the other hand, unbelief

Jesus as Son of God the thought of the first part (i. 19-iv. 54).

Faith and unbelief have a subsidiary place.

begins to manifest itself in the hostile deputation from the Sanhedrim (chap. i.), in the conduct of the authorities at the temple (chap. ii.), in the attitude of the population at Jerusalem, and of the disciples of John the Baptist (chap. iii.), in short, in that of the Galilean people as it is characterized by the words of Jesus,

“ If ye see not signs and miracles, ye will not believe.”

Unbelief
the thought
of the
second part
(v.-xii.).

In the second part (chap. v.-xii.) it is unbelief that prevails. No doubt Jesus continues to manifest Himself, for this fundamental feature remains the root and principle of all the progress of the history, and side by side with unbelief, faith is increasing in His disciples and among others also, such as Nicodemus (chap. vii. 50), the man born blind (ix.), the inhabitants of Bethany (xi.), and a certain number in Jerusalem (vii. 40; x. 42; xii. 11 and 20). But the most striking characteristic of this part of the narrative is the progress of Israelitish unbelief. Its development is manifested on the occasion of the three miracles performed in Judea, viz., the healing of the impotent man (chap. v.), the man born blind (chap. ix.), and the resurrection of Lazarus (chap. xi.), then in a miracle no less striking that took place in Galilee, the multiplication of the loaves of bread (chap. vi.). In the fifth chapter, the design is formed at Jerusalem of putting Jesus to death as a Sabbath-

The progress
of
Israelitish
unbelief.

breaker and a blasphemer (v. 16 and 18). In the sixth chapter, the Galilean faith, which had apparently been so vigorous, withers when Jesus speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in order to be saved (vi. 60-66). In the seventh chapter things come to such a height during the sojourn of Jesus at Jerusalem, that the Sanhedrim takes the first proceedings against Him, and gives its officers orders to seize Him (ver. 32). In the eighth chapter Jesus is obliged to deny to the people of Jerusalem the title of children of Abraham, and to substitute that of the children of the devil (ver. 39-41). The first attempt to stone Him is made (ver. 59). In the ninth chapter we find that every follower of Jesus had been excommunicated from the synagogue (ver. 22), and we see the hatred and jealousy of the heads of the people burst forth. In the tenth chapter a still more serious attempt is made to stone Him, which Jesus checks with these words:

The
withering of
Galilean
faith.

Christ's
followers
excommuni-
cated.

“Many good works have I showed you from my Father, for which of these works do ye stone Me?” (vers. 31, 32)

In chapter eleven, the third good work, the raising of Lazarus, causes the hatred of the Sanhedrim to blaze forth upon Him, and leads to the decision being formed of putting Jesus to death as soon as possible (ver. 53). The first step is taken for carrying out this project. He is publicly denounced as one worthy of death. The twelfth

The raising
of Lazarus
and the
hatred of
the
Sanhedrim.

chapter completes the development of unbelief. He who is to play the part of the traitor reveals himself when Mary anoints the feet of Jesus (ch. xii. 4, 5). Then at the close of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the chief priests understand that there is no more room for delay; Jesus, on His part, leaves the temple, saying to the people:

“Yet a little while the light is with you” (v. 19-35).

Here the narrator comes to a pause:

“He departed, and did hide Himself from them;”

Retrospec-
tive view
of the
culmination
of unbelief.

that is to say, He did not reappear in the temple. The narrative at this point of tragical importance is followed by a retrospective *coup d'œil* upon the fact of the national unbelief now fully matured. Such a result is so astonishing that it must be looked at as a divine dispensation. A judicial hardening fell upon Israel, that is why, in spite of such miracles and striking testimonies, (which the author resumes in ver. 44-50), Israel held out and remained in unbelief to the end. This conclusion leaves no doubt as to the thought that predominates in this second part, viz., the development of the national unbelief, hastened on by each great act of the public ministry of Jesus.

Third part
(xiii.-xvii.)

The
development
of faith.

The third part (ch. xiii.-xvii.) is devoted to the delineation of the third fact—the development of faith. In the intimate circle of those who were

depositories of the faith, Jesus more fully manifests Himself, first, by an act fitted to dispel all carnal Messianic hopes, the washing of the disciples' feet; then by a series of instructions which arise from questions put to Him by four of His disciples; and lastly, in His leave-taking of them. He shows them what will be their mission in the world, to renew it by His life working in them, He foretells to them the enmity they would encounter, but also promises them the help of His Spirit, which will make them courageous witnesses for Him. This part also ends with an incident which clearly marks the close. The disciples, as if dazzled by the light that had been shown them, exclaim—

Fuller self-manifestation of Jesus.

“ Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things . . . We believe that Thou camest forth from God.”

Jesus then gives thanks for their faith, although He knows the weakness of it, and in a final prayer commends His person, His disciples, His work to the Father, whose will He has accomplished in this world. This prayer (ch. xvii.), which has been called the priestly prayer, is the act by which the great High Priest of humanity presents to God as His offering, the fruit of His travail, the faith kindled in the hearts of the eleven as an earnest of the future faith of mankind. The traitor among the apostles had, in the course of the evening, left the room in which the passover-

His great High-priestly prayer.

supper was eaten. He shows in this part the subsidiary element of unbelief, as the disciples in the previous part had represented that of faith.

Fourth part
(xviii., xix.)

The consum-
mation
of unbelief.

In the fourth part (ch. xviii. and xix.), which contains the account of the Passion, is described the *consummation of unbelief*, always roused into activity by the holy manifestations of Jesus, and leaving room also for the element of faith. The arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane, where unbelief and hardness of heart culminate in the kiss of the traitor Judas; the appearance of Jesus before Annas, with the denial of Peter; His being brought before Pilate, where His accusers display the most consummate guile, and where Jesus made His judge tremble; the scene of the Crucifixion, during which those tender words were addressed to the disciple whom Jesus loved: "Behold thy mother," and then, "Behold thy Son"; then the breaking of the legs of the malefactors, while those of Jesus were untouched; then the mysterious signs, the piercing of the spear, and the flow of blood and water; then the burial, at which the first gleam of the divine triumph lightens this sorrowful scene: all these things show us the outward victory of unbelief, the result of the events recorded in the second part.

Fifth part
(xx. 1-29).

The fifth part (ch. xx.) is connected exactly in the same way with the third; it is the consummation of the disciples' faith through the

resurrection of Christ, first in the cases of Peter and John, to whom the appearance of the sepulchre presenting no trace of a violent removal became a revelation, then of Mary Magdalene, and in the evening of the day, of all the disciples, to whom Jesus granted a foretaste, as it were, of the day of Pentecost; and lastly, the supreme victory of faith in Thomas, the most refractory of the eleven, who, the moment his unbelief was conquered, attains at a bound to the perception of the full height of the object of faith, in this exclamation, "My Lord and my God." This cry of adoration is the close of the narrative, it is in evident keeping with the first words of the book:

The consummation of faith.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God."

What perfect consistency and unity run through the whole narrative! It is truly a great whole. We feel that we possess the result of the most intense contemplation and of the deepest meditation. One sentence is added after this exclamation of Thomas. It gives us a glance at the future development of the Church that shall be born from the apostolic testimony:

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Corresponding to the prologue is a short conclusion (xx. 30, 31). The author in it explains the method and object of his narrative. He did not intend to relate all he knew of the history of Jesus,

Conclusion
(xx. 30, 31).

for He had performed a number of other miracles in the presence of His disciples, "which are not written in this book." This expression, especially in Greek, leads us to suppose that these things are contained in other books, otherwise how could the author of this one pass them over in silence; and why did he explain himself by saying in *this* book? Concerning his object, he has selected from the whole of the facts those which he deemed most appropriate to produce in his readers the same faith which he had derived from witnessing the events, that is, that Jesus is the Messiah promised to the Jews, and the Son of God given to the world. It is in this faith that he had found eternal life, and he desired that his readers might find it also. (On the appendix, chap. xxi., see above.)

The object
of the writer
of the
Gospel.

IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NARRATIVE.

Three
contrasts.

THE greatness of a man is shown by the contrasts that appear in his character; it is the same thing with books, and judged only from this point of view, the fourth Gospel ought to appear to us as a most remarkable work. It presents, indeed, three remarkable contrasts.

First
contrast.
The com-
pleteness
of the
framework.

The first contrast relates to the plan of the narrative. On the one hand, the framework of it is much more *complete* than that of the three other

Gospels; and on the other, the narrative has an extraordinarily fragmentary character. To read the three Synoptic¹ Gospels superficially, one would think that the public ministry of Jesus lasted no longer than one year. For no journey to the feasts at Jerusalem is mentioned between the baptism of Jesus and the Easter when He was crucified. We see, on the contrary, from St. John's account, that the public life of Jesus must have lasted at least two years and a half, for between the baptism and the first passover feast, mentioned in ch. ii. 13, a certain time elapsed which may be calculated at some months. In the sixth chapter a second passover is mentioned, and again at the thirteenth chapter, the third and last. This makes the time about two years and a half; and, in fact, such a time was not too long for the earthly work of Jesus. It was but a very short time in which to accomplish the spiritual training of His apostles, and to prepare them for founding the kingdom of God. And the progress of hatred which culminated in the final catastrophe could only have taken place in a period such as that. In studying more closely the Synoptical Gospels themselves, we find a confirmation of this result. The incident related in the sixth chapter (first and following verses) of

The
frag-
mentariness
of the
narrative.

¹ The three Gospels are thus designated in one word—synoptic—because of the almost parallel order of the three accounts.

St. Luke, and in the parallel passages of St. Matthew and St. Mark, supposes a spring time, and consequently a passover feast passed by Jesus in Galilee, long before the passover at which He was put to death. This spring ought, according to all the surroundings of the situation, to correspond with the sixth of St. John, and the events which preceded in the Synoptics suppose one year of Messianic activity.

What the narrative assumes.

And nevertheless how broken and *fragmentary* is the narrative of John. It assumes a multitude of facts to be known, which have not been related. For instance, the ministry of John the Baptist, and the baptism of Jesus (chap. i. 19), the two personages, Andrew and Peter (ver. 41, and foll.), the mother of Jesus (chap. ii. 1), His first home at Nazareth (chap. ii. 12), the election of the twelve apostles (chap. vi. 70), are spoken of absolutely as if the reader were acquainted with all the details. Much more, the narrative though continuous in a certain respect, contains several surprising gaps. The second return of Jesus to Galilee (chap. iv.) must have happened in the month of December (v. 35); the fifth chapter brings us, according to all probability, to the feast of Purim, in the month of March of the following year: between these two facts, there are three months which the author passes over in complete silence. Between chapters five and six,

Gaps in the narrative.

a month (month of April), of which he says not one word. Between chap. vi. (Easter) and vii. (Feast of Tabernacles, end of September), seven months, of which we only know what we are told in the first verse of the seventh chapter :

“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him.”

Between this feast and that of the dedication (chap. x. 22), which took place at the end of December, again three months without any record of events, and from this time till the following passover, only one single event—the raising of Lazarus—is related in detail. There are seventeen months in all out of two years and a half, of which we only know some isolated days ; and if we add the nine months which must have elapsed between His sojourn at Jerusalem at the first passover (chap. ii. 13) and the return to Galilee (chap. iv. 1), that makes no less than twenty-six months out of thirty of which the narrative gives us no account.

Gives no account of twenty-six months out of thirty.

This is indeed a strange method of relating a history ! This mode of narration is followed in a number of particular cases. Whilst omitting almost entirely the accounts of the Galilean ministry, the author relates in detail five sojourns at Jerusalem (ii. 5 ; v. 1 ; vii.–x. 21 ; x. 22, and foll. ; xii.–xix.). Whilst relating the first calling of the disciples in Judea (chap. i.), he omits the

second at the Lake of Gennesaret. Whilst describing the washing of the disciples' feet (chap. xiii.) at the last supper, he omits the institution of the Lord's Supper. He relates the examination before Annas (xviii. 13), but does not say a word about the solemn appearance before Caiaphas, when Jesus was condemned to death by the Sanhedrim (although he does not forget to mention the place where it was held), compare xviii. 24, and the word *first*, v. 13.

The method
pre-supposes
other
narratives.

Such a method of relating a history can only be explained by the author having before him other narratives which were circulating in the Church, in which all the facts omitted by him were mentioned. This is, no doubt, the meaning of the words, "in *this* book" (chap. xx. 30), as we have already indicated.

Second
contrast :
The style.

A second striking contrast is to be remarked in the *style* of this book. The Greek is pure, and free from all Hebraisms. And nevertheless one feels that the thoughts of the author are entirely Jewish. All is intuitive, as among the Semitic race; nothing dialectic, as among the Greeks. The variety of Greek particles is wanting, one only meets with *and* and *then*. The parallelisms, which characterise the Hebrew poetry, appear as soon as the sentiment rises. "No language," says Ewald, "can, as to the spirit and inspiration of it, be more Hebrew than that of our author."

In this style, which has not its equal in any sacred or profane literature, the clothing is Greek, but the body is Hebrew.

A third contrast, more important still, is felt in the *spirit* of the book. On the one hand, the author shows that he is quite freed from all legal forms.

Third
contrast:
The spirit.

“The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem worship the Father . . . but the true worshippers shall worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (Chap. iv. 21-24.)

The privileges of the Jew are abolished, and from all people shall be gathered sheep, who shall be one fold, under one Shepherd (x. 16). No more works of the law; the only work God demands is faith (vi. 28, 29). All salvation consists in dwelling in Christ, eating His flesh, and drinking His blood spiritually (vi. 56-63). And on the other hand, what a living relation to the old covenant! Israel, the dwelling-place of Jesus, prepared long before His coming (i. 11). The temple of Jerusalem is the house of His Father, into which He enters and acts as His Son (ii. 16). To believe in Moses is to believe in Him, and to reject Him is to reject Moses (v. 46, 47). Salvation is of the Jews (iv. 22). Jesus Himself is the Messiah promised to them, the true brazen serpent, the true manna, the true Rock whence springs the living water, the true Cloud in the wilderness, the Joy of

Abraham, the Shepherd of Israel, the King promised who should come in the name of the Lord, the Adonai whom Isaiah beheld, the true Paschal Lamb, Jehovah pierced by His people.¹ All the living roots in the thoughts of the author are planted in the soil of the Old Testament. Here is a heart and a mind formed in the school of Him, who, by His coming, had at the same time fulfilled and abolished the old covenant. John at once lives in the old economy, and soars above it, as Jesus had done.

V.

THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK.

Objections
against the
Apostle's
authorship.
First ob-
jection: the
philo-
sophical
character.

- WE now ask who is the *man* who could have written such a book, in which are united and resolved into perfect harmony the most striking spiritual contrasts which it is possible to conceive? Let us forget for a moment the unanimous tradition of the Church, and open the book itself. At the first word the critic meets us and says: "It is not possible that an Apostle of Jesus should have called his Master 'The Word,' for you have here a speculative idea and a philosophical expression which do not harmonize with the spirit and language of a Galilean fisherman; such a man would simply have related his history, with-

¹ John i. 46; iii. 14; vi. 32; vii. 37; viii. 12, 56; x. 1, etc.; xii. 13, 41; xix. 36, 37.

out heading his narrative with a metaphysical idea." But the most simple historian is entitled to put at the beginning of his narrative an idea, if he believes that that idea is realized in the fact that he is about to narrate, and that that idea expresses the essence of it. Now, we cannot doubt that in the mind of the author of this Gospel, the incarnation of the Divine Word is a fact as truly historical and real as all the particular events he is about to relate. When Matthew and Mark commence their narratives by inscribing at the beginning, the one the title of *Messiah*, the other, that of *the Son of God*, they write neither more nor less history than St. John does, when he calls Jesus the Word.

But again, from what source has a disciple of Jesus derived this notion and this term? The Jew Philo made use of it at that time to designate the Mediator between an infinite God and a finite world, who was to prevent the defilement of the Supreme Being by the contact with the material world. Can it be supposed that John, the Apostle, became a disciple of the Jewish philosopher at Alexandria? Assuredly not, we reply; and this is not necessary to explain why he uses the term "the Word" as applied to his Master. It was enough for him, 1st, to have listened to the teaching of Jesus, 2nd, to have read and studied the Old Testament, and 3rd, to know the manner

Philo's use
of the term
"The
Word."

Why the
Apostle used
it.

in which this book was explained even in his time in Palestine.

1. *The teaching of Jesus.*—He had heard his Master say:—

What the author had heard his Master say of Himself.

“What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?” (vi. 62.)

And these words had revealed Jesus to him as a Being who had existed before His birth into this world. On another occasion he had heard the most startling words from His lips:—

“Before Abraham was, I AM” (viii. 58);

and from this contrast between the *came to be* of Abraham, and the *I am* of Jesus, he must have concluded the eternal existence of the latter. He had heard Jesus praying and saying:—

“Glorify Me, O Father, with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” (xvii. 5);

and a moment after he had heard Jesus add these words:—

“That they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: or Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (xvii. 24);

How the author understood the words of Jesus.

and he had understood them to mean that this existence of Jesus was not only anterior to His birth into this world or to the life of Abraham, but to the origin of the world and time, that it was not only eternal but glorious; nay more, it was the existence of a Being who was the object of the

love of the Father, and who enjoyed Divine communion with Him.

After such testimony, confirmed by daily contact with Jesus, we can understand how he recognized Him to be a Divine Being, and that he needed to find a term that would express the Divine side of His nature.

2. *The teaching of the Old Testament.*—Genesis and Exodus frequently speak of a Person, distinct from God and yet one with Him, who appeared when God desired to manifest Himself to the eyes of men; these books call him, “The angel, or *the sent*, of the Lord.” In Exodus, God says of this being, “My name¹ is in Him” (xxiii. 21); and in the histories in which He plays a part, His name alternates with that of the Lord Himself. In Isaiah He is called “The angel of His presence” (lxiii. 9), and in Malachi (iii. 1), “The angel of the covenant.” In this latter passage He is also called *Adonai*, *Lord*, a title which belongs to God. Beside this mysterious Being, the Old Testament continually speaks of the word of the Lord, whom God sends to the earth to execute His commands, to create and to destroy, to kill and to make alive.² It was by this word that God made the world. (Genesis i.)

The testimony of the Old Testament. A person distinct from and yet one with God.

It was only necessary to put these two ideas

¹ That is to say, the full revelation of My essence.

² Isa. lv. 10, 11; Psa. xxxiii. 6.; cvii. 20, etc.

together to arrive at the conclusion that there was a Being, *Divine* like the word of God, and *personal* like the angel of the Lord, and thus to derive from the Old Testament the premises of the idea announced in the preamble of John's Gospel. The Jewish doctors had done this before the Apostle.

3. *The rabbinical explanation.* — Even before Jesus Christ came, the doctors of the law had taken account of what we have just said; and in the paraphrases which they gave (in contemporary language) of the Old Testament, they had been in the habit of substituting for the name of God, whenever they represented Him as doing anything in the world, the expression *The Word of the Lord* (*Mémar* or *Memra di Jehova*). In the passage in the Old Testament, "God said to the young lad" (Ishmael), Gen. xxi. 20, the rabbinical paraphrase was "The Word of Jehovah" was with. . . Where Jacob said (Gen. xxviii. 21), "The Lord shall be my God," the paraphrase ran "The Word of the Lord shall be my God," and the same throughout the Old Testament. The name "Word" then was employed in Palestine before John wrote, to designate the Divine Being by whom God manifested Himself to the finite world. We also find this expression used in the Apocalypse, the author of which has certainly never been to the school of Philo, and who gives to the glorified Jesus this same name, "*The Word of God*" (xix. 13)

The para-
phrase of the
doctors of
the law.

The use of
the name
"Word" in
Palestine
before John
wrote.

We find St. Paul also using the same idea, without using the same word, in the passage (1 Cor. x. 9) where he speaks of the appearance of Jehovah in the cloud in the wilderness by this name, *The Christ*. John himself, in chap. xii. 41, declares that the Adonai whose glory Isaiah saw (chap. vi.), was no other than the Christ who afterwards appeared as Jesus. We see how familiar this idea was to the Jews at this time. John only applied it, as well as the term which expressed it, to the Divine Being, whom he acknowledged as his Master.

Philo was a Jewish thinker, who, having set out with the teaching of the Old Testament, had gone over to the Greek philosophy and attempted to combine them. John also had the same beginning, but passed into the school of Christ, and made use of the notions and terms employed in the Old Testament to convey to his readers and to the Church what he beheld in the person of his new Master, and what he had heard from His lips. That is the very simple explanation of the resemblance and the difference between these two writers; it is not necessary to send the apostle to the sage of Alexandria to account for it.

Philo and
John.

It is not difficult either to understand, how, that finding himself at Ephesus, in the great intellectual centre where Asiatic and Greek thought met, John made use of this term "The Word,"

an expression of philosophical import. It is as if he wished to say to these thinkers around him, "This knowledge of God which you are seeking for in your high speculations, we Christians possess in the person of Christ, whom we preach unto you, and who is the revelation of God, as a man's word is the revelation of his thought."

Second
objection:
difference
of the
narrative
from that
of the
Synoptics.

Their
harmony.

A second class of objections against the origin of this Gospel is drawn from the so-called irreconcilable differences which this narrative presents to the other three. The most considerable of all is certainly that which relates to the principal scene of the ministry of Jesus; according to the Synoptics—Galilee; according to John—Jerusalem and Judea. But as we have already seen, there is abundant room in the narrative of John (in the three months that divide the fourth and fifth chapter, in the month that separate the fifth and sixth, in the seven months that intervene between the sixth and seventh, and lastly, in the three that separate the first part of the tenth chapter from the last), to place all the materials of the Galilean ministry contained in the Synoptics. And as to the journeys to Jerusalem, described by John, and omitted, with the exception of the last, by the other evangelists, not only are they necessary to the comprehension of the final catastrophe, which without them would not have been prepared, but they are confirmed by a number of incidents related

The
Synoptics
confirm the
fourth
Gospel.

in the Synoptical Gospels, such as the intimate relation with the family at Bethany, which comes out in the visit related by St. Luke (x. 38-42),—we know, in fact, that Bethany is situated about half-a-league from Jerusalem;—also the relations that Jesus must have had with the master of the ass, and the owner of the house where he had His last supper (Luke xix. 30, 31; xxii. 8-12); but especially these words :

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *how often* would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” (Luke xiii. 34; Matt. xxiii. 37),

related by the Synoptics, certainly prove that Jesus had been at Jerusalem many times before His last visit. John thus does not contradict the Synoptics on this point; according to their own showing, he completes them. And it is the same in all the other cases where he seems to differ from them. Take, for instance, the first calling of the disciples (placed by John in Judea; in Galilee by the Synoptics), or even the purification of the temple (placed by him at the *first* passover; at the *last* by the others), or the place assigned to the anointing of Mary (placed by Matthew and Mark some days later than by John), or lastly, the difference relative to the evening of the last Supper (according to John the eve of the Paschal supper, and, in appearance at least, by the Synoptics, the very evening of the Paschal feast). In all these cases

St. John
completes
the
Synoptics.

it is more and more acknowledged, either that the two narratives are the complement of each other, or that the historic truth, dimly presented by the Synoptics, emerges into full daylight in John's narrative. The cause of this relation between them is easy to understand: the first of these two accounts was written from oral tradition, as the resemblance (often literal) of the three Gospels proves; while John, as an eye-witness, has written, directly, from personal reminiscences, bearing in mind the traditions in order to complete them, and only omitting what had been sufficiently and accurately reported.

Third
objection:
difference
of the
discourses
from those
of the
Synoptics,
and their
resemblance
to those
of the
Baptist and
of John
himself.

But the chief attack has been made by adversaries on the mode of our Saviour's teaching, presented by St. John, both in its contents and in its form.

We no longer find in it the short and striking maxims, which lent such a popular character to the discourses of Jesus in the Synoptics, and which enter into all the domains of moral life, those "gems of parables" in particular, which leave such an ineffaceable remembrance. There are, in the fourth Gospel, as critics, who deny its authenticity, declare, long pretentious, monotonous, abstract tirades, full of mystical metaphysics, only speaking of Jesus Himself, and His obscure relations to God, and outside of all relation to practical life, and, above all, the doctrine of the pre-existence

of Jesus, which makes a truly human life an impossibility to Him, and substitutes for the heart of man a Logos immoveable and impassable.

As to the style, they further object, that the manner in which the author makes Jesus speak is doubly suspicious ; first, because his language has nothing in common with that of the Synoptical discourses, and then there is too much resemblance to the style of the author himself in the prologue and in his Epistles, as well as that which he attributes to John the Baptist in the Gospel.

We do not reply, as has often been done, by pretending that it was by no means impossible that an Apostle should make Jesus speak according to his own fancy, whether in substance or in form. No,—we cannot believe that any one of those who had called Jesus “Master,” who had been struck by the holiness of His person and speech, could have acted in so disrespectful a manner to Him, nor would they have done with respect to His teaching, what Plato, for example, did with respect to that of Socrates. No doubt the words of Jesus suffered in passing through the pen of John, a double transformation. First, as to language, Jesus spoke Aramaic, a language allied to Hebrew, but essentially different to Greek, in which our Gospel is written, and it is natural that in the process of translation, the language of John could not fail more or less to leave its mark upon that of Jesus.

Reply to
third
objection.

The effect of
translation.

John had
not a written
text to
translate
from.

Take the same work, translated by two different persons, who are both authors on their own account, and will you not see that the style of each translation takes the colour of the other works of each author? But there is more: John did not translate a written text, neither did he reproduce, as the Synoptists did, an oral tradition strongly formulated, and in some sort stereotyped. The discourses which he related were written only in his heart, where they were the subject of meditation and continual elaboration. Half a century had nearly elapsed after he had heard them, when he reproduced them in a new language, after having assimilated them spiritually. Under such conditions, it assuredly became very difficult to discern what belonged to the language of Jesus and what to that of John; and we need not be astonished beyond measure, either at the difference of form between the discourses of the fourth Gospel, and those of the other Evangelists on the one hand, or at their resemblance to the other writings of the Apostle, on the other.

Specimen of
Johannine
style in the
Synoptics.

But, happily, we have in the Synoptic Gospels a remarkable specimen of the language habitually used by Jesus in the Gospel of John. We find it in the words in which Jesus expresses the joy that He felt when the seventy returned from their mission, and gave Him an account of their success. Jesus exclaimed:

"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is, but the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him" (Luke x. 21, 22; Matt. xi. 25-27).

Who in reading this passage would not think he had before him the words of the Gospel of John?

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35).

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18).

"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (John ix. 39).

What close relation both in idea and form there is in these words of John to those which we have just quoted from the Synoptics! Some one has called this passage from Matthew and Luke, an erratic Johannine block that has strayed into the Synoptic soil. What is the bearing of this significant fact? Assuredly if a block of granite exists anywhere, there must be neighbouring hills of a homogeneous formation. Thus these words so essentially Johannine in the midst of the Synoptic narrative, prove to us that the kind of language we find in John, is not a creation of his fancy, but that it had its real place in the teaching of our Lord. Perhaps it was necessary, in order that the words of Jesus should take this elevated and

Bearing of
the fact.

sublime strain, which has been called mystic, and which is nothing more than a filial accent in its most perfect form, that a particular emotion should fill his heart, as in the case which we have quoted. Such moments were perhaps exceptional in his life, and in order to apprehend and reproduce them a witness specially prepared was necessary. Every one, even among the apostles, was not capable of following Jesus to such heights as these. If this be the case, then we can understand why the disciple whom Jesus loved was chosen for this rôle, and why he preserved with particular care any such words.

Two modes
of teaching
adopted by
Jesus.

Jesus has Himself characterized the two different modes of teaching which He employed.

“If,” said He to Nicodemus, “I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” (iii. 12.)

Then he adds,—

“No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.”

There were times then, when He spake to the inhabitants of the earth, the things of earth; these were His moral discourses, like the Sermon on the Mount, where He described the duty of justice, self-renunciation and humility and true piety, all that referred to the relation of man to man and to God. But there were other times when He spoke to the world as coming from heaven, and

as revealing the things of heaven. Then disclosing to mankind the consciousness of His Sonship, He unveiled something of that paternal and filial relation, and tried to make the world understand something of the nature of the Father's gift in sending them His Søn, and through His Son, eternal life.

It was such words as these especially that John had received into his inmost being, on which he had long meditated, which he sought to reproduce in the nine or ten discourses of Jesus, which he has preserved to us as the most sublime he had heard during the two years and a half that he had passed with Him. He has thus supplemented the other evangelists with respect to the teaching of Jesus, as we have already seen he did with the history.

John
receptive of
of the
heavenly
kind.

But here a grave question arises about this reproduction of the discourses of our Lord in a foreign language, after the lapse of so many years. Might not John have allowed his own ideas to have penetrated into his writing rather than what he remembered of the words of Jesus? Could he always successfully guard himself from such infiltrations, and can we read the discourses contained in his Gospel with the certainty that it is Jesus who speaks, and not the author? To those who believe in the authenticity of this Gospel, and who know consequently that its author was among those to whom Jesus gave this promise,—

The exact
preservation
of the Lord's
discourses in
the fourth
Gospel.

“I will send you the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak ; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John xvi. 13, 14 ; xiv. 26),—

Argument
from
inspiration
inadmissible
in this
discussion.

the answer is in this very promise. But face to face with this criticism, we are not allowed to suppose what is in question, and we must examine the objection apart from inspiration.

John puts
the term
“ Word ”
nowhere
into the
mouth of
Jesus.

The first fact that strikes us is that this term *Word*, which is inscribed at the beginning of the prologue, which plays such a great part in it, which consequently contained in it all that John felt and conceived of the person of Jesus, is nowhere put by him into the mouth of the Lord. And yet he had ample opportunity of doing so, particularly when he relates in the tenth chapter the reply of Jesus to those who were about to stone Him because He made Himself God—

“ Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods ? ” (v. 34.)

(it is thus the Psalmist addressed the Israelite judges, as organs of divine justice),

“ If then,” added Jesus, “ the law calls them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ? ” (v. 35, 36.)

One would expect to hear after the words *say ye*

of *Him*, these: "Who is the Word itself;" but Jesus only adds—

"Whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world."

The Evangelist has not here yielded to the temptation to put into the mouth of Jesus his favourite expression, even when the connexion of the discourse would naturally have led him to do so. This reserve is so much the more remarkable as the name Word given to Jesus is found not only in the prologue of the Gospel, but also in the two other works of this author, in the first Epistle (i. 1), and in the Apocalypse (xix. 13).

We find in the prologue of the Gospel a still more important idea, which is expressed in such a way as to show us clearly what an important place it had in the mind of our author. It is that of the creation and preservation of all things by the Word. It would have been very easy for him to have put this idea into the mouth of Jesus, and that in many places, but especially in that passage of His intercessory prayer, where our Lord says to His Father :

Nor the idea
of creation
and pre-
servation
by the
Word.

"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me : for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24).

But the author refrained from doing it. The expression, "*to be born of God*," is found in the

Nor the expression "to be born of God."

prologue, and occurs nine or ten times in the First Epistle of St. John. It was then very familiar to our author, yet nevertheless we do not meet with it once in the discourses of Jesus, not even in His conversation with Nicodemus, where it would have come in so naturally when He was speaking of "being born of water and of the Spirit" (ch. iii. 5). We see then with what delicacy our author ever respects the line of demarcation between the thoughts of Jesus and his own, and even between the expressions of Jesus and his own.

He thus distinguishes between the thoughts of Jesus and his own.

Three objections from the interview with Nicodemus.

Three examples are often cited to prove that this Evangelist did not always manifest a similar reserve. The first is at the close of the interview with Nicodemus (ch. iii. from ver. 16), where it is pretended that he puts his own reflections into the mouth of Jesus, and that all this moral judgment wrought in the world by the Gospel has no natural place in this discourse. But, as Jesus had at the commencement of it put the new birth in opposition to the works of the law, the Messianic revelation to the old, then the elevation of Christ on the cross to His elevation on a throne, he closes by showing the contrast between the judgment or spiritual sifting which the Gospel effects, to the judgment which the Pharisees dreamed of, assigning salvation to the Jews and damnation to the heathen. It was thus that Jesus opposed His own

to the Pharisaic programme along the whole line, in His conversation with Nicodemus. We must then not detach this last passage from the rest of the conversation to which it belongs organically.

The discourse which John puts into the mouth of John the Baptist in the third chapter, from the twenty-seventh verse, in reply to the jealous reproaches of his disciples about the conduct of Jesus, is also quoted. The Evangelist, they say, makes the forerunner speak exactly in the same way as the Lord, and both speak absolutely like himself in the prologue and in the Epistle. But they forget that when the Baptist said, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand," he only reproduces the words of God at the baptism of Jesus, at which he had taken part: "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." They also forget that the resemblance between this discourse of the forerunner and the words of Jesus to Nicodemus (chap. iii. 1-21) is explained by the Baptist himself, when comparing himself to the friend of the bridegroom, he adds that he had heard the Bridegroom's voice, and his heart had leapt for joy (ver. 29). We may therefore conclude that the words of Jesus had been reported to him, and that they made his joy perfect. Let us not disregard the inimitable originality of the central words of this discourse of John: "He must increase, but

Objection
from the
discourse
attributed
to John the
Baptist.
John iii.

I must decrease" (ver. 30), for surely no one could have invented those words. It is the forerunner who thus spake, it is the theme of his entire discourse.

Objection
from the
retrospect
of the
development
of Jewish
unbelief.

As to the third example that is usually quoted,—the discourse which ends the retrospective *coup d'œil* of the development of Jewish unbelief (xii. 44–50), it is evident that this is not the report of a special discourse. Had he not just said that "Jesus went away, and hid Himself from them"? How after that could He have made Jesus speak again to them? As he recapitulates in the thirty-seventh verse all the miracles of Jesus, he gives from verses forty-four to fifty a *summary* of all His teaching, in order to show what terrible responsibility rested on the people that had rejected Him, Who had spoken and acted in such a manner.

Comparison
of the
Lord's dis-
courses with
the first
Epistle.

We have now verified the difference that may be observed between the prologue and the discourses of the Gospel. We arrive at an analogous result by comparing these same discourses with the First Epistle. It is easy to convince ourselves that if the same spirit reigns in both these, it is not the same thought that has dictated these two kinds of composition. The author of the Epistle often recurs to the idea of *expiation*.

"Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John ii. 2, and elsewhere).

Well! This truth, which had been clearly revealed to this Apostle only after the death of

Jesus on the cross, does not come out explicitly in the discourses of the Gospel, which proves that he did not compose them at a later period and in his own style. The advent of the *Anti-Christ*, which plays such an important part in the Epistle, is entirely omitted in the discourses of Jesus in the Gospel. He there foretells persecutions, but does not say a word about this supreme and powerful seduction. It is the same with the *false teachers*, against whom John warns us in his Epistle. He might have made Jesus announce them in the Gospel, but he does nothing of the sort. He frequently speaks in the Epistle of the *glorious return* of Jesus which was approaching, but this thought occupies no place in the Gospel narrative. Jesus here announced only His own coming in spirit on the Day of Pentecost, John not having related the great discourse on the last things recorded in Matt. xxiv., in which Jesus had announced His visible return, although he fully believed in this return, which he knew and admitted, (as his Epistle proves), he did not feel at liberty to introduce this subject into the Lord's discourses recorded in his Gospel. Neither has he lent to Jesus certain expressions which were peculiarly his own, as we see from his Epistle, such, for example, as the *anointing of the Holy Spirit*, "*of the sent of God*," and "*the sin unto death*."

Omissions
in the
Gospel of
truths
contained in
the Epistle.

Lastly, let us notice one more general feature.

General-
isations in
the Epistle.

It is easier to establish a firmer intellectual and logical attitude in the discourses of the Gospel than in the Epistle, which leads to the thought that in the former the author had the support of a higher thought than his own, and that consequently they are not his own work. And if we compare more closely the contents of these two compositions, drawn up by the same pen, we shall easily perceive that their author, in composing the Epistle, has generalized, and given us under the form of axioms or maxims, the thoughts expressed in the Gospel in regard to certain special positions. "God so loved the world," Jesus had said; "God is Love," says John. "I am the Light of the world," said Jesus; "God is Light," says John. "Ye are of your father, the devil," said Jesus; "He who committeth sin is of the devil," writes John. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," said Jesus to the apostles; "It is not we who first loved God," writes John, "but God who first loved us." The whole Epistle is composed in a similar manner. John extracts from the occasional and striking remarks of his Master, doctrines and, in a certain sense, religious philosophy, useful for all ages, which are contained in them. Who could imagine that the mind that performed this second operation, could be the same as that which revealed itself with such a creative originality and appropriateness in these discourses?

The conclusion to be drawn from all these facts is that, whatever is the resemblance that exists between the discourses of the Gospel and the other writings of the Apostle, there are between these compositions, differences both in contents and in form sufficiently marked to attest a difference of origin between them, and consequently to prove the historical truth of the former.

Moreover, does it not strike every one who has a sense of divine things, that Jesus alone could have spoken as the author of the fourth Gospel makes Him speak? If we admit that there was in the second century a man who was able to make Him speak in such a manner, we must also admit that there existed in the second century a second Jesus, not only equal, but superior to the first. Baur has really supposed the existence at this epoch of some eminent Christian whom he has called the *Great Unknown*. Now-a-days critics refer the existence of this mysterious author nearer to the time of John, they even make him a disciple of this Apostle, from whom he received this spiritual heritage. They ask, for example, whether it might not be that presbyter John, disciple of Jesus, who according to Papias ought to have lived in Asia Minor at the same time and a little later than the Apostle of the same name. But we have only to glance at the writings that we have of the most remarkable men of this period, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of

Comparison
with other
writers of
the first part
of the
second
century.

Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Papias of Hierapolis, to see the immense distance that there is between these fathers and the author of this Gospel, and to understand how he must have shined as a star of the first magnitude in the firmament of the Church, and to conclude that he could not have passed unperceived in the midst of men who were so inferior to him, and could not have remained the Great Unknown.

Internal
evidence of
authorship.

Besides, had we no tradition pointing positively to the Apostle John as the author of this Gospel we might by attentively studying this Gospel, put our finger on the author.

The writer a
Jew.

The fourth Evangelist could only have been a Christian of *Jewish* origin. That is proved by what we have advanced concerning his style and the spirit of his writings.

A Pales-
tinian con-
temporary
with Jesus.

This Judeo-Christian could only have been a Christian of *Palestine* and *contemporary* with Jesus. He knew the minutest details of the different localities of the Holy Land, the size of the Lake of Tiberias, the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem, for instance. He described the country about Jacob's well as, according to M. Renan, only a man could do who had frequently passed it. He is *au fait* as to the relationship between the two high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. He knows exactly how many years they have been rebuilding the Temple when Jesus visits Jerusalem for the first

time after His baptism; he knew that the Romans had taken from the Jews the right of capital punishment, etc., etc.

This Palestinian contemporary of Jesus, is a *member of the intimate circle of friends*, formed around the person of the Lord. He knew personally the Apostles Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Peter, etc., and the kind of relation that Jesus had to each of them. The naïve replies of Philip, the spiteful remarks of Judas, the cry of devotion mingled with the unbelief of Thomas, are all known to him. He knew who were the four disciples who by their questions drew forth the instructions of Jesus at that intimate conversation they had with Him on the eve of His death. He knew the name of the high priest's servant, whose ear Peter cut off in Gethsemane; he recalls the smallest details of the course of the two disciples at the grave of Jesus on the morning of the resurrection, etc., etc. All that would only have been disgusting charlatanism on the part of a man who had not lived in close intimacy with the apostles, and would consequently only treat the disciples as characters in a romance.

A companion of Jesus.

This companion of Jesus could only have been one of His *apostles*. He allows himself in many points to complete and present in a quite new light the tradition received in the Church, as we find it recorded in the Synoptics. The narrative

An Apostle.

of the fourth Gospel is equivalent to a complete renovation of the history of Jesus transmitted by the Synoptics, harmonizing very well with them, but remaining absolutely independent. Only an apostle, who felt perfectly sure of his authority in the Church, could stand face to face with the most ancient Gospels, already received in the churches, and maintain such a position.

The disciple
whom Jesus
loved.

This apostle could be no other than the *disciple whom Jesus loved*. This is clearly proved by the intimate and personal details that are found in the narrative, particularly the information about the secret communications between Peter and this disciple at the last Supper (xiii. 24-27), or the absolutely autobiographical details of the manner in which this disciple was brought to believe in the resurrection (xx. 8, 9), or the indication of the moment where he understood the accomplishment of Zechariah's prophecy about Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem (xii. 16), the testimony that the author gives us of his presence at the foot of the cross (xix. 35). This testimony can only apply to the disciple "whom Jesus loved," because he is the only one whose presence in the scene with the mother of Jesus is recorded in the narrative. See the touching words in ver. 26.

The son of
Zebedee.

The disciple whom Jesus loved could only be *John, the son of Zebedee*. That is evident from the fact that the other disciples that he speaks of are

all designated in the Gospel by their names—Peter, Andrew, Thomas, Nathanael, etc.,—while the names of John and his brother James nowhere appear. We see the same thing also in chap. xxi. 2, where the two sons of Zebedee, who in all the lists of the Apostles are at the head, are here placed the last, after the other Apostles, and only before two disciples, not Apostles. Now, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who takes part in this scene, according to v. 20 and 21, can not have been James, the other son of Zebedee, for he was dead at a very early date (Acts xii. 2). It can only have been John, his brother. Lastly—and we have here the plainest proof—the disciple whom Jesus loved must have been among the three Apostles preferred by the Lord, viz., Peter, James, and John. Now, it could not be Peter, who, according to the narrative, is distinguished from him, nor James, who died the first of the Apostles, while the disciple whom Jesus loved must have survived all the others, according to ch. xxi. 23. It could then be no other than John.

It is consequently with the fullest confidence that the Church as a whole, and every Christian,

The true proof.

can make use of this Gospel, at once so simple and so sublime. The perusal of ten lines of this narrative is the best proof of its authenticity for every upright mind. This intimate and continuous communion with God as a Father could not

have been imagined, it must have been lived to be contemplated, and contemplated to be recorded in this manner. It is as if the gate of heaven were opened to the view of the dwellers on earth, in order, as the author of this unique book says in conclusion, that every reader may find life in the revelation of Jesus, the Christ, Son of God, as he himself had found life in it.



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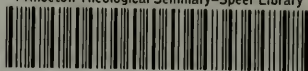
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The authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

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